

SWAIN'S GEM PUTS AN END TO CLAPTON

KENNY SWAIN, Wycombe Wanderers' talented young forward, scored one of the cleverest goals of the season against Clapton on Saturday to seal two more Isthmian League points for the Blues in their penultimate league encounter of the season.

The goal came five minutes before the end of a second half completely dominated by Wycombe. Swain picked up possession inside the Clapton half but found his route to goal blocked by several defenders. He looked up, spotted goalkeeper Gary Grant off his line, and curled a teasing lob over his head and into the net.

It was a brilliant piece of ingenuity, to say the least and it capped another fine performance by the red-haired winger, who had a quiet game against Slough in Easter Monday's Berks and Bucks Cup final. The conditions on that day were wet and muddy but again on Saturday the ground was hard and bumpy, making control difficult once again.

Wanderers certainly took time to get going. They were never in any real trouble against lowly Clapton but they seldom looked like breaking through in the first half. The Blues were without Ian Rundle and Dave Bullock, both hit by colds and so Rob Williams switched into the back four alongside John Delaney. Alan Gane took over from Johnny Hutchinson and Mick Holifield moved into Williams' position in midfield.

Clapton, although having conceded 97 goals in the league this season, put up a good performance at Loakes Park recently and only went down 1-0. But on Saturday they had re-arranged their line up.

Apart from a couple of corners, Wycombe had little to offer in the first 20 minutes and it was Clapton again who almost broke through in the 24th minute. From another Wanderers' corner, Clapton cleared the ball out as far as Andy Taylor who was faced by Derek Gamblin. The full-back, however, lost possession and Taylor raced on towards the goal. As Maskell advanced, Taylor tried to lift the ball over the 'keeper's head, but sent it fractionally over the top.

Up front, Wycombe's centre-forward Keith Searle was finding himself a fair bit of room against

Clapton 0, Wycombe W. 2 Report by STUART EARP

the home defence but service from midfield was erratic. Searle brought a scrappy first half to a close when he shot wide from 15 yards after Horseman had laid on the opportunity.

The second half was far superior to the first 45 minutes from the outset. After only 40 seconds Swain forced Grant to make a good close range save and then Alan Gane broke through but saw his shot fisted away at the foot of a post.

The offensive on the Clapton net was ceaseless and yet a goal looked remote. In the 50th minute Horseman slipped full-back Alan Lawrence and crossed into the box for Searle to send in a header which struck the upright and then Gane's cross was headed against the crossbar by Delaney.

Clapton had no answer to the waves of attacks but somehow managed to withstand the onslaught. Wanderers, in fact, had created more chances in the first ten minutes of the new half than in the whole of the first period.

But once again, the question must be asked: why weren't there any goals? Again, the answer was a combination of ill fortune and poor finishing. Mick Holifield, who had an industrious game in midfield, wasted a great cross from Swain and when he did get his sights on the target the ball was deflected for one of ten Wycombe corners in the match.

Inevitably, the pressure had to tell in the end and after 71 minutes, Wanderers took the lead.

Swain took a corner on the right and Delaney rose high above the Clapton defence and powered a header into the net. Grant did well to get a hand to the ball but the pace took it past him. It was one of the few examples we have had of Delaney's attacking ability and his first headed goal for many games.

Haysman, Clapton's most dangerous player, completed a rather unenviable double for himself in the 75th minute. He was booked by referee Underwood for the second time against Wycombe this season. His offence was about the most blatant case for a booking I've seen this season. When the referee awarded a free-kick against him, Haysman picked up the ball and punted it about 50

yards away from the spot. The referee had no option but to take his name after such an exhibition.

Rob Williams sent a header just wide in the 80th minute as Wycombe continued to surge forward. Then came Swain's gem of a goal and a few minutes later he had the nerve to try the same move again. But this time, Grant managed to get back in time to stop it crossing the line.

Two goals down, Clapton produced their best efforts of the match in the last few minutes when Maskell saved well from Haysman and then the same player sent a fierce shot over the bar. But they were about all the home side had to offer in the second half and their Isthmian League future, on this showing, must be gravely in the balance.

CLAPTON: G. Grant, D. Warden, A. Lawrence, M. Richardson, J. McCayna, R. Lowry, R. Spicer (sub. D. Meaden 76 mins.), A. Taylor, G. Lewzey, C. Haysman, G. Warden.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell, D. Gamblin, R. Williams, J. Delaney, P. Birdseye, A. Gane, M. Holifield, L. Pritchard, A. Horseman, K. Searle, K. Swain.

Referee: K. Underwood (Romford).
Half-time: 0-0. **Goalscorers:** Wycombe: Delaney (71), Swain (85).